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ABSTRACT

Intended for students taking the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test in Alberta, Canada, this booklet contains the writing portion of the test, which requires the student to write an expository composition in response to four reading selections within the framework of a given situation. The booklet contains space both for planning and drafting and for writing the finished work. (SRT)

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Grade 9 English Language Arts
ACHIEVEMENT TEST

Part A: Composition

June 1986

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THE WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Next winter your Physical Education 10 class will be going on a week-long winter camping and cross-country skiing trip in the Canadian Rockies.

Many parents heard about avalanche problems in the Rockies last winter, and have telephoned the school with concerns about your safety. The principal has asked you to write to the parents to provide information that will address their concerns.

Write a composition that includes all of the information necessary to reassure the parents regarding avalanches and your safety. Your composition will be mailed to the parents of all the students in your class.

INSTRUCTIONS

READ the selections that follow on pages 2 to 9. Think about information and ideas that may be useful.

NOTE the information and interesting examples that will be useful for your audience, and that will fulfil your purpose. Use point form on the note sheets provided next to each reading selection.

LIST and ARRANGE your ideas on the page labelled PLANNING. Remember that you may use ideas from your own experience and reading.

CHOOSE a form for your composition that will fulfil your purpose.

PREPARE your draft on the pages labelled DRAFTING. Use your own words. Your draft will not be evaluated, although it will be considered if your revised work is incomplete.

Your composition must be in YOUR OWN WORDS. However, you MAY use one or two VERY BRIEF direct quotations to support your ideas.

WRITE your revised composition in blue or black ink on the pages labelled REVISED WORK. Proofread carefully. You may make additional corrections.

You may use a DICTIONARY and/or a THESAURUS.

You have two hours to complete the assignment.

BUDGET YOUR TIME: An appropriate use of time might be:

Planning:	reading, notemaking, outlining	– 30 minutes
Writing:	drafting, revising	– 80 minutes
Proofreading:		– 10 minutes

Selection One

AVALANCHE!

A German riddle asks: What flies without wings, strikes without hands, and sees without eyes? The answer: the avalanche beast.

The innocent origins of avalanches belie the stupendous devastation they wreak. Snow roaring downward at speeds up to 300 km per hour can flatten forests, obliterate villages, and toss trains from their tracks like toys. As much as 750,000 cu metres have been known to give way in a single slide. This quantity of snow would fill 10,000 dump-trucks — if they were lined up bumper to bumper they would stretch 75 km.

Canada is fortunate that its major centres of population are far from the avalanche zones. Still, the white death takes its toll. Sixty-two railway workmen died in 1910 in an avalanche that swept through Rogers Pass, B.C. In 1915, 57 men were killed by rampaging snow and mud at the Jane camp of the Britannia Mine in the Howe Sound area north of Vancouver. Twenty-six more were buried in 1965 at the Granduc Mine near Stewart, B.C.

In British Columbia and the Canadian Rockies the average is seven avalanche-related deaths per year; in the western United States the number is 16. "Considering the dangers, it's amazing that there are not more victims," says engineer Peter Schaerer, head of a National Research Council (NRC) avalanche team which has worked for the past 20 years to improve avalanche safety precautions in Canada.

Avalanches are of two main types: slab avalanches, which start out over large areas when a body of snow separates as a moving slab, leaving a well-defined fracture line; and loose-snow avalanches, which start in a small area and grow in size and force as they descend.

Wet snow or dry powdery snow can be involved in either type of avalanche. Wet snow slides occur most often in spring and can produce boulder-size lumps that grow as big as houses as they roll down a mountainside. Rocks, soil, and trees are thrust ahead of these snow masses, and then become engulfed in the plunge. Once halted, these slides solidify instantly, hard as concrete and often many metres deep.

Dry snow avalanches behave differently. They travel much faster, sometimes as fast as 300 km per hour. NRC research suggests that typical dry snow avalanches consist of a core of dense snow flowing along the surface, crowned by a tumbling mixture of snowballs and dust. This airborne cloud actually is a globe of heavy gas that displaces enormous quantities of air, creating winds of hurricane force around it. Trees and buildings may be blasted and toppled by windshocks before the snow reaches them. Autopsies of avalanche victims who were untouched by onrushing snow have revealed lung damage similar to the effects of explosions, obviously caused by wind blast.

Despite the technical advances in minimizing the effects of avalanches, deaths continue. Most victims are skiers whose quest for deep untouched snow leads them away from the popular slopes and into avalanche danger zones. According to an NRC study of the years 1955-76, the majority of skiers killed in Canadian avalanches died either because of careless judgment or total ignorance of safety precautions.

Kerry Banks

NOTES – Selection One

Useful Information
Interesting Examples

Selection Two

from a News Release by Canadian Press

December 27, 1982

Each year, thousands of tonnes of snow hurtle down the slopes of the Rocky Mountains, yet few people understand the dangers and the devastating power of avalanches.

"One of the biggest problems with avalanches is that people don't understand the hazards," says Keith Everts, an assistant chief warden in Banff National Park. "Lack of information is probably the single biggest cause of problems."

Courses in avalanche awareness are becoming increasingly popular in the Rockies. They give people a chance to observe the phenomenon first-hand. However, people living outside the parks don't always have the opportunity.

As snow gathers on the high slopes, alternately melting and freezing with the weather, it can become unstable and suddenly break away; a huge sliding mass of choking snow that can snap trees like matchsticks and leave mountainsides scarred.

The authorities try to help make weekend skiers aware of the conditions. Pre-recorded avalanche forecasts are available over the telephone.

Thirteen wardens, along with some ski patrol members, monitor the depth of the snow and the weather conditions and produce the forecasts.

Road traffic and skiers at the park's resorts are fairly well protected, but people wishing to cross-country ski or snowshoe outside resorts are on their own.

"We take extensive measures to provide a high level of safety in the lift-service ski areas," says Tim Auger, a public safety warden and avalanche forecaster at Sunshine Village. "If people pay attention to the signs and traffic control and fencing that's provided they shouldn't have any problems."

However, some skiers are lured outside the controlled areas by the temptation of deep powder snow.

Those skiers take a chance. Some are charged under the National Parks Act. Some have escaped serious injury when swept away by avalanches. Others have died.

"What they don't realize is that they're not only playing with their own lives, but their tracks may be leading someone else in to do the same thing," Auger says.

NOTES – Selection Two

Useful Information
Interesting Examples

Selection Three

from *THE HIKING-CLIMBING HANDBOOK*

If an avalanche comes down and you are the only survivor, the lives of your buried comrades may depend on what you do in the next hour. *Check for further slide danger* and pick a safe escape route in case of a repeat slide. Mark the point of the avalanche path where the victim was last seen as he was carried down by the snow. Next, make a quick but careful search of the surface of the avalanche for evidence of the victim or clues to his location. Mark the location of any pieces of equipment you may find for indications of the path taken by the flowing snow. Kick up the snow to uncover anything that may lie just beneath the surface.

If you are the *sole* survivor, you must still make a thorough search of the avalanche area before going for help. This may seem obvious, but it is a rule all too often neglected. Even the simplest search may enable you to find the victim and free him alive. If it will take many hours or longer to summon a rescue party, you must concentrate on making as thorough a search as possible with your own resources since the help would almost certainly come too late. The chances of a buried victim being recovered alive diminish after 15 minutes.

If the initial search fails, begin probing with a ski, a ski pole, a probe pole, or a tree branch. Trees, ledges, benches, or other terrain features which have caught the snow should be probed first. Probing of likely spots can continue until a rescue party arrives. If you are alone, you will have to decide when to break off the effort and seek help, depending on how far away it is. If there are several survivors, send only two. Those remaining can search for the victim.

When going for help, travel carefully, avoiding more avalanche dangers. Mark your route so you can find your way back. The rescue party will normally expect you to guide them back to the accident scene.

Treat an avalanche victim immediately for suffocation and shock. Free his nose and mouth of snow and administer mouth-to-mouth artificial respiration if necessary. Clean snow from inside his clothing and place him in a sleeping bag with his head downhill. Any further injuries should then be treated according to standard first-aid practices.

Curtis Casewit

NOTES – Selection Three

Useful Information
Interesting Examples

Selection Four

IN THIRTY SECONDS: LEDUC CAMP, BRITISH COLUMBIA, 1965

The most appropriate term for the winter climate of Leduc Camp and vicinity is *horrible*. Winter is eight months long, during which it is apt to snow seven hundred inches, almost sixty feet.

The managers of the project were not unaware of avalanches. Many of them were sons of the north country, no strangers to cold and snow. But none of them had ever encountered snow on this scale. The mere presence of snow everywhere in such quantity is stifling. It clogs, sifts into, piles around and over everything. And on 30-degree mountainsides with thousands of feet of vertical, it avalanches. . . .

On February 18, 1965, at 0957 hours — the moment is known exactly because it was almost coffee-break time — seventy men, almost half the population of the camp, were in the tunnel, in the open, or in a group of buildings that included the cookhouse, coffee shack, carpenter shop, and the garage in the main camp; the machine shop and powerhouse at the mine entrance. At 0957, death rode out of the storm, swinging an icy scythe that mowed flat the southern half of the camp. As if on a compass bearing, the avalanche then swung left just enough to pick up the "dry,"* halfway down the slope, and ram it into the buildings at the mine entrance.

The force of the avalanche was so great that it did more than knock buildings down; it shredded them. It picked up railroad steel and ventilating pipe, heavy wooden beams and plywood sheets, and hurled them like javelins. It tore the helicopter into small pieces, like a destructive child with a toy. Freakishly, in the way of avalanches and tornadoes, it left unharmed a water tank standing right in the center of the path of destruction.

At the inquest weeks later, a doctor was to remark upon the high incidence of death from a broken neck or a fractured skull, as if from a single, shattering blow.

Montgomery M. Atwater

* a building where the men changed from their wet clothing after a shift in the mine

NOTES – Selection Four

Useful Information
Interesting Examples

IDEAS FROM YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE AND READING

Useful Information
Interesting Examples

Go on to the next page.

THE WRITING ASSIGNMENT

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Write a composition that includes all of the information necessary to reassure the parents regarding avalanches and your safety. Your composition will be mailed to the parents of all the students in your class.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING

- CONSIDER your audience.
- FOCUS on the purpose of your writing.
- CHOOSE a form that will fulfil your purpose.
- PLAN your writing based on USEFUL information and INTERESTING examples that will help you to communicate well with your audience.
- USE ideas and examples from your own experience and reading as well as from the readings in the test booklet.
- YOUR COMPOSITION MUST BE IN YOUR OWN WORDS. However, you MAY support your ideas with BRIEF quotations.
- PROOFREAD and correct your revised work.

DRAFTING

There is additional space for drafting on even-numbered pages.

REVISED WORK

There is additional space for revised work on odd-numbered pages.

DRAFTING

CREDITS

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Excerpt: "Avalanches" from a December 27, 1982 News Release by Canadian Press. Reprinted by permission of The Canadian Press.

Excerpt: "Avalanche First Aid Procedure" by Curtis Casewit. From *The Hiking-Climbing Handbook*, pp. 151-152. New York: Hawthorne Books Inc. © 1969.

Montgomery M. Atwater. "In Thirty Seconds: Leduc Camp, British Columbia, 1965" from *The Avalanche Hunters* (Philadelphia: Macrae Smith Company). Reprinted by permission of Martha Atwater.

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Marker ID number: | | | |

CONTENT	0 (INS)	1	2	3	4	5
DEVELOPMENT	0 (INS)	1	2	3	4	5
SENTENCE STRUCTURE	0 (INS)	1	2	3	4	5
VOCABULARY	0 (INS)	1	2	3	4	5
CONVENTIONS	0 (INS)	1	2	3	4	5

E 97248

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Marker ID number: ☐☐☐

CONTENT	0 (INS)	1	2	3	4	5
DEVELOPMENT	0 (INS)	1	2	3	4	5
SENTENCE STRUCTURE	0 (INS)	1	2	3	4	5
VOCABULARY	0 (INS)	1	2	3	4	5
CONVENTIONS	0 (INS)	1	2	3	4	5

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Teacher: Please write the student's Part B (multiple-choice) answer sheet number in BOTH places provided below.

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☐☐☐☐☐ Part B (multiple-choice) answer sheet number

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Teacher: Please write your school code in the space provided below.

School code: ☐☐☐☐

Student name (please print): _____ _____
First Name Last Name

School name (please print): _____